

Children and Autonomy | the biggest parenting challenges you will face, Part 3

I. People living for their own satisfaction will always pursue autonomy.

- If I don't trust God's plan, I will believe that I alone am responsible to achieve my own security. Therefore, I will pursue the technologies I believe are best and use them as I see fit.
 - Two things may happen in this scenario. First, I may miserably fail to achieve my desired level of security. Generally speaking, all this accomplishes is to make me more and more obsessive about finding new ways to get what I want.
 - Second, I may be tempted to believe that using just one more piece of technology (a gun, rope, knife, or bottle of medication) may be just what I need to finally be at peace.
- On the other hand, let's say that I'm "successful" in attaining the security I desire . . . Believe it or not both of these extremes produce the same response in people.
- Whether I get what I want or my life tumbles out of my control, when I believe that it's my sole responsibility to secure my satisfaction, I will develop a very dangerous mentality called "autonomy." Autonomy is "the quality or state of being self-governing; self-directing freedom and especially moral independence."
- The temptation to experience feelings of autonomy are inherent in our human condition regardless of our age. The more life works the way we want it to, the more we'll believe we don't need others to tell us how to make life work.

II. However, everyone is fully dependent on God.

- **We're dependent on God for our physical life and growth.**
 - Genesis teaches that we would never have existed had it not been for God.
 - In Psalm 139:13, David proclaims, *"For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb."*
 - I Corinthians 8:6 says, *"There is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him."*
 - Hebrews 1:3 describes Christ this way, *"And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power."*
 - If we were to become truly autonomous from God, we would cease to exist.
- **We're dependent on God for our spiritual life and growth.**
 - Romans 8:7-8, *"Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for **it is not even able to do so**, 8 and those who are in the flesh **cannot please God.**"*
 - James 4:4 reads, *"You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."*
 - Isaiah 64:6, *"For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment."*
 - Proverbs 15:8 says, *"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord."*
 - And the King James rendering of Proverbs 21:4 tells us, *"The plowing of the wicked is sin."*
 - There is absolutely nothing an unbeliever can do to please God. Everything they do is a sin because everything they do stands in defiance to God's Lordship. They can't be righteous. They can't sacrifice. They can't even plow without being an enemy of God.

- **We're dependent on God in both form and function.**
 - Just as a potter shapes the clay with its end purpose in mind, God created us just as we are because we have a purpose to fulfill.
 - No potter makes a mug to be used as a trash can or a giant clay receptacle to be used as a cup. In the same way, God determined our form in order to facilitate our function. What's our function? What is the one thing God created us and your whole family to accomplish?
 - We were created to bring Him glory. That's it.
 - That means that everything about us (our form) was created to fulfill that lofty and divine purpose of celebrating God (our function). Our minds and emotions and bodies were created to glorify God. We have no other purpose other than to worship Him.
 - Yes, we all have sub-purposes — things God wants us to accomplish in order that we may fulfill our main purpose — but ultimately it makes no sense for a human being to try to be autonomous.
 - A truly autonomous human being is paradox. It's a misnomer. It's an impossibility. It's like a car trying to be pencil.
 - I Corinthians 8:6? *"There is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things **and we exist for Him.**"* Just a couple chapters later Paul would tell the Corinthians, *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."*
 - This is why autonomy is a delusion.
 - The impossibility of true autonomy actually explains why we want it so badly. Humans hate being dependent on others. We're skeptical because we see that no one else has it figured out. We're untrusting because we've been failed so often. And — if we happen to believe in a god — we project all of those same attributes on him.
 - Romans 1 says, *"For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."*
 - Satan loves to deceive us into thinking that we can make decisions apart from God. That's what he did to Eve, and that's what he does to us.
 - And once he can convince us to view ourselves as being capable enough to protect and care and provide for ourselves, we will believe we no longer need God.
 - Even though our kids face the same temptation to autonomy that all previous generations faced, our kids do have a couple new struggles.
 - Reality shows like America's Got Talent convince us that we could have it all if people just recognized how cool we are.
 - If we craft our social media experience just right, we feel like stars.
 - And video games make us the Lords of our own kingdoms, the saviors of our own cities, and the creators of our own worlds.
 - We sit there with our screens — fully enraptured by the fact that we're just as rich and beautiful and strong and popular and powerful as we could possibly be.
 - And — slowly but surely — the idea that we can achieve happiness for ourselves starts to take root at the very core of our being.

Your children's budding desire for autonomy is something with which you will have to grapple. Don't be surprised by it.